**MORNING PRAYER READINGS  
July 1-5, 2024** *(Proper 8)*  
  
**MONDAY, July 1**(PSALM 106: Part 1, beginning at verse 1 to 18 BCP 741)  
  
**FIRST LESSON** A reading from the Book of Numbers [22:1-21]  
  
The Israelites set out, and camped in the plains of Moab across the Jordan from Jericho.   
  
Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. Moab was in great dread of the people, because they were so numerous; Moab was overcome with fear of the people of Israel. And Moab said to the elders of Midian, ‘This horde will now lick up all that is around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.’   
  
Now Balak son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. He sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor at Pethor, which is on the Euphrates, in the land of Amaw, to summon him, saying, ‘A people has come out of Egypt; they have spread over the face of the earth, and they have settled next to me. Come now, curse this people for me, since they are stronger than I; perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land; for I know that whomsoever you bless is blessed, and whomsoever you curse is cursed.’   
  
So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and gave him Balak’s message.   
  
He said to them, ‘Stay here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, just as the Lord speaks to me’; so the officials of Moab stayed with Balaam.   
  
God came to Balaam and said, ‘Who are these men with you?’ Balaam said to God, ‘King Balak son of Zippor of Moab has sent me this message: “A people has come out of Egypt and has spread over the face of the earth; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.” ’   
  
God said to Balaam, ‘You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed.’ So Balaam rose in the morning, and said to the officials of Balak, ‘Go to your own land, for the Lord has refused to let me go with you.’ So the officials of Moab rose and went to Balak, and said, ‘Balaam refuses to come with us.’   
  
Once again Balak sent officials, more numerous and more distinguished than these. They came to Balaam and said to him, ‘Thus says Balak son of Zippor: “Do not let anything hinder you from coming to me; for I will surely do you great honor, and whatever you say to me I will do; come, curse this people for me.” ’  
  
But Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, ‘Although Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the Lord my God, to do less or more. You remain here, as the others did, so that I may learn what more the Lord may say to me.’   
  
That night God came to Balaam and said to him, ‘If the men have come to summon you, get up and go with them; but do only what I tell you to do.’ So Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the officials of Moab.

—Here ends the Lesson (*or* Reading).  
[*OR* The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*]  
  
**SECOND LESSON** A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew [21:12-22]  
  
Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves. He said to them, ‘It is written,  
“My house shall be called a house of prayer”;  
   but you are making it a den of robbers.’   
  
The blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the amazing things that he did, and heard the children crying out in the temple, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David’, they became angry and said to him, ‘Do you hear what these are saying?’   
  
Jesus said to them, ‘Yes; have you never read,  
“Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies  
   you have prepared praise for yourself”?’   
He left them, went out of the city to Bethany, and spent the night there.   
  
In the morning, when he returned to the city, he was hungry. And seeing a fig tree by the side of the road, he went to it and found nothing at all on it but leaves. Then he said to it, ‘May no fruit ever come from you again!’ And the fig tree withered at once.   
  
When the disciples saw it, they were amazed, saying, ‘How did the fig tree wither at once?’ Jesus answered them, ‘Truly I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, “Be lifted up and thrown into the sea”, it will be done. Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith, you will receive.’

—Here ends the Lesson (*or* Reading).  
[*OR* The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*]  
  
  
**TUESDAY, July 2**(PSALM 120, 121, 122 & 123 BCP 778)  
  
**FIRST LESSON** A reading from the Book of Numbers [22:21-38]  
  
Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the officials of Moab.   
  
God’s anger was kindled because he was going, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the road as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. The donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand; so the donkey turned off the road, and went into the field; and Balaam struck the donkey, to turn it back on to the road.   
  
Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it scraped against the wall, and scraped Balaam’s foot against the wall; so he struck it again.   
  
Then the angel of the Lord went ahead, and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it lay down under Balaam; and Balaam’s anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff.   
  
Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and it said to Balaam, ‘What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?’ Balaam said to the donkey, ‘Because you have made a fool of me! I wish I had a sword in my hand! I would kill you right now!’   
  
But the donkey said to Balaam, ‘Am I not your donkey, which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I been in the habit of treating you in this way?’ And he said, ‘No.’   
  
Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road, with his drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed down, falling on his face.   
  
The angel of the Lord said to him, ‘Why have you struck your donkey these three times? I have come out as an adversary, because your way is perverse before me. The donkey saw me, and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away from me, surely I would by now have killed you and let it live.’   
  
Then Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, ‘I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now therefore, if it is displeasing to you, I will return home.’   
  
The angel of the Lord said to Balaam, ‘Go with the men; but speak only what I tell you to speak.’ So Balaam went on with the officials of Balak.   
  
When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him at Ir-moab, on the boundary formed by the Arnon, at the farthest point of the boundary. Balak said to Balaam, ‘Did I not send to summon you? Why did you not come to me? Am I not able to honor you?’   
  
Balaam said to Balak, ‘I have come to you now, but do I have power to say just anything? The word God puts in my mouth, that is what I must say.’

—Here ends the Lesson (*or* Reading).  
[*OR* The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*]  
  
**SECOND LESSON** A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew [21:23-32]  
  
When Jesus entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?’   
  
Jesus said to them, ‘I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?’   
  
And they argued with one another, ‘If we say, “From heaven”, he will say to us, “Why then did you not believe him?” But if we say, “Of human origin”, we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet.’ So they answered Jesus, ‘We do not know.’   
  
And he said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

‘What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, “Son, go and work in the vineyard today.” He answered, “I will not”; but later he changed his mind and went. The father went to the second and said the same; and he answered, “I go, sir”; but he did not go.   
  
‘Which of the two did the will of his father?’   
  
They said, ‘The first.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, the tax-collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax-collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and even after you saw it, you did not change your minds and believe him.’

—Here ends the Lesson (*or* Reading).  
[*OR* The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*]  
  
  
**WEDNESDAY, July 3**(PSALM 119:145-176 BCP 775)  
  
**FIRST LESSON** A reading from the Book of Numbers [22:41—23:12]  
  
On the next day Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-baal; and from there he could see part of the people of Israel.   
  
Then Balaam said to Balak, ‘Build me seven altars here, and prepare seven bulls and seven rams for me.’ Balak did as Balaam had said; and Balak and Balaam offered a bull and a ram on each altar. Then Balaam said to Balak, ‘Stay here beside your burnt-offerings while I go aside. Perhaps the Lord will come to meet me. Whatever he shows me I will tell you.’ And he went to a bare height.   
  
Then God met Balaam; and Balaam said to him, ‘I have arranged the seven altars, and have offered a bull and a ram on each altar.’   
  
The Lord put a word in Balaam’s mouth, and said, ‘Return to Balak, and this is what you must say.’   
  
So he returned to Balak, who was standing beside his burnt-offerings with all the officials of Moab. Then Balaam uttered his oracle, saying:  
‘Balak has brought me from Aram,  
   the king of Moab from the eastern mountains:  
“Come, curse Jacob for me;  
   Come, denounce Israel!”   
  
‘How can I curse whom God has not cursed?  
   How can I denounce those whom the Lord has not denounced?   
For from the top of the crags I see him,  
   from the hills I behold him;  
Here is a people living alone,  
   and not reckoning itself among the nations!   
Who can count the dust of Jacob,  
   or number the dust-cloud of Israel?  
Let me die the death of the upright,  
   and let my end be like his!’   
  
Then Balak said to Balaam, ‘What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but now you have done nothing but bless them.’ He answered, ‘Must I not take care to say what the Lord puts into my mouth?’

—Here ends the Lesson (*or* Reading).  
[*OR* The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*]  
  
**SECOND LESSON** A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew [21:33-46]  
  
[Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people:] ‘Listen to another parable.   
  
‘There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watch-tower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another.   
  
‘Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.   
  
‘Finally he sent his son to them, saying, “They will respect my son.” But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.” So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.   
  
‘Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’ They said to him, ‘He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.’   
  
Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the scriptures:  
“The stone that the builders rejected  
   has become the cornerstone;  
this was the Lord’s doing,  
   and it is amazing in our eyes”?  
  
Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.’   
  
When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

—Here ends the Lesson (*or* Reading).  
[*OR* The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*]  
  
  
**THURSDAY, July 4**Holy Day: INDEPENDENCE DAY (BCP 258)(PSALM 145 BCP 801)  
The psalm and second lesson are from the Holy Day’s Principal Service Lectionary.  
  
**FIRST LESSON** A reading from the Book of Numbers [23:11-26]  
  
Balak said to Balaam, ‘What have you done to me? I brought you to curse my enemies, but now you have done nothing but bless them.’ He answered, ‘Must I not take care to say what the Lord puts into my mouth?’   
  
So Balak said to him, ‘Come with me to another place from which you may see them; you shall see only part of them, and shall not see them all; then curse them for me from there.’ So he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah. He built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. Balaam said to Balak, ‘Stand here beside your burnt-offerings, while I meet the Lord over there.’   
  
The Lord met Balaam, put a word into his mouth, and said, ‘Return to Balak, and this is what you shall say.’   
  
When he came to him, he was standing beside his burnt-offerings with the officials of Moab. Balak said to him, ‘What has the Lord said?’ Then Balaam uttered his oracle, saying:  
‘Rise, Balak, and hear;  
   listen to me, O son of Zippor:   
God is not a human being, that he should lie,  
   or a mortal, that he should change his mind.  
Has he promised, and will he not do it?  
   Has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it? ‘  
  
‘See, I received a command to bless;  
   he has blessed, and I cannot revoke it.   
He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob;  
   nor has he seen trouble in Israel.  
The Lord their God is with them,  
   acclaimed as a king among them.   
  
‘God, who brings them out of Egypt,  
   is like the horns of a wild ox for them.   
Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob,  
   no divination against Israel;  
now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel,  
   “See what God has done!”   
  
‘Look, a people rising up like a lioness,  
   and rousing itself like a lion!  
It does not lie down until it has eaten the prey  
   and drunk the blood of the slain.’   
  
Then Balak said to Balaam, ‘Do not curse them at all, and do not bless them at all.’ But Balaam answered Balak, ‘Did I not tell you, “Whatever the Lord says, that is what I must do”?’

—Here ends the Lesson (*or* Reading).  
[*OR* The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*]  
  
**SECOND LESSON** A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew [5:43-48]  
  
[Jesus said:] ‘You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.   
  
‘For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?   
  
‘Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

—Here ends the Lesson (*or* Reading).  
[*OR* The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*]  
  
  
**FRIDAY, July 5**(PSALM 140 & 142 BCP 796)  
*Most Fridays after Pentecost are days of special devotion (BCP 17).*  
  
**FIRST LESSON** A reading from the Book of Numbers [24:1-13]  
  
Balaam saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel, so he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens, but set his face towards the wilderness. Balaam looked up and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe.   
  
Then the spirit of God came upon him, and he uttered his oracle, saying:  
‘The oracle of Balaam son of Beor,  
   the oracle of the man whose eye is clear,   
the oracle of one who hears the words of God,  
   who sees the vision of the Almighty,  
   who falls down, but with eyes uncovered:   
how fair are your tents, O Jacob,  
   your encampments, O Israel!   
  
‘Like palm groves that stretch far away,  
   like gardens beside a river,  
like aloes that the Lord has planted,  
   like cedar trees beside the waters.   
Water shall flow from his buckets,  
   and his seed shall have abundant water,  
his king shall be higher than Agag,  
   and his kingdom shall be exalted.   
  
‘God, who brings him out of Egypt,  
   is like the horns of a wild ox for him;  
he shall devour the nations that are his foes  
   and break their bones.  
   He shall strike with his arrows.   
He crouched, he lay down like a lion,  
   and like a lioness; who will rouse him up?  
Blessed is everyone who blesses you,  
   and cursed is everyone who curses you.’   
  
Then Balak’s anger was kindled against Balaam, and he struck his hands together. Balak said to Balaam, ‘I summoned you to curse my enemies, but instead you have blessed them these three times. Now be off with you! Go home! I said, “I will reward you richly”, but the Lord has denied you any reward.’   
  
And Balaam said to Balak, ‘Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, “If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own will; what the Lord says, that is what I will say”?

—Here ends the Lesson (*or* Reading).  
[*OR* The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*]  
  
**SECOND LESSON** A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew [22:15-22]  
  
The Pharisees went and plotted to entrap Jesus in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, ‘Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?’   
  
But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, ‘Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.’ And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, ‘Whose head is this, and whose title?’ They answered, ‘The emperor’s.’   
  
Then he said to them, ‘Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’   
  
When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

—Here ends the Lesson (*or* Reading).  
[*OR* The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*]  
  
**SATURDAY, July 6**  
[Psalm 137:1-6(7-9) & 144](http://satucket.com/lectionary/Psalm137&144.html)  
[Numbers 24:12-25](http://bible.oremus.org?passage=Numbers+24:12-25)  
[Matthew 22:23-40](http://bible.oremus.org?passage=Matthew+22:23-40)  
  
**SUNDAY, July 7** (*Proper 9,* BCP 230)  
[Psalm 146 & 147](http://satucket.com/lectionary/Psalm146-7.html)  
[Numbers 27:12-23](http://bible.oremus.org?passage=Numbers+27:12-23)  
[Mark 1:14-20](http://bible.oremus.org?passage=Mark+1:14-20)  
  
**NOTE ABOUT THE PSALTER SELECTIONS LISTED:**  
In an effort to pray a majority of the 150 psalms every few months, those referenced above are appointed for mornings in *The Book of Common Prayer* during the current 7-week cycle.